

SENATE BILL 2046

By Tracy

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4;
Title 33; Title 56; Title 63; Title 68 and Title 71,
relative to a study commission on health care.

WHEREAS, there are about 900,000 uninsured in Tennessee who represent about one
(1) in six (6) Tennesseans;

WHEREAS, there are about one hundred and fifty thousand (150,000) uninsured
children in Tennessee;

WHEREAS, Tennessee is last in providing home and community based alternatives for
long term care;

WHEREAS, current state initiatives may not address the needs of the majority of
uninsured Tennesseans;

WHEREAS, Tennessee ranks consistently high in personal bankruptcies and medical
debt is the number one cause of personal bankruptcy in Tennessee;

WHEREAS, the dramatic increases in emergency rooms utilization may force hospitals
to close, which is especially true for rural hospitals;

WHEREAS, the county hospital is in many instances the largest employer in a county;

WHEREAS, when county hospitals close, the doctors leave the area because there is
not a hospital to refer patients to;

WHEREAS, Tennessee may be facing a shortage of qualified nurses and other medical
professionals;

WHEREAS, the shortage of doctors in many areas of the state is also forcing a higher
utilization of emergency room use;

WHEREAS, the lack of affordable and quality health insurance is the number one reason
why Tennesseans are lacking health insurance;

WHEREAS, Tennessee, like all states, relies on federal matching dollars to fund health care for more than one (1) in six (6) of all Tennesseans between the ages of birth to sixty five (65);

WHEREAS, Tennesseans' per capita income is lower than most states;

WHEREAS, thousands of Tennesseans rely on their employer for health care and many employers are dropping coverage and some are closing and moving overseas;

WHEREAS, employers and health insurance companies continue to drop high-risk patients without any protections from the state;

WHEREAS, predatory "health care" schemes are infiltrating Tennessee and preying upon the uninsured;

WHEREAS, access to affordable and quality care is a partnership between the state government, the federal government, business and the citizenry;

WHEREAS, new government programs are being initiated and old programs are being changed in both the private and public sectors;

WHEREAS, we do not know at this time where the gaps in coverage will fall and the impact that coverage and the lack of coverage will have on Tennessee;

WHEREAS, Tennesseans have the right to guaranteed affordable, continuous, high-quality health care; and

WHEREAS, Tennesseans should be treated with the dignity befitting all human beings and should not have to beg for humane medical care or go without care simply because of economic circumstance; now, therefore

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4, is amended by adding the following as a new chapter 56:

4-56-101. There is established a study commission on health care to study the

reasons and consequences for uninsurance and to make appropriate recommendations. The commission shall consist of twenty-one (21) members who shall be jointly appointed by the speakers of both houses of the general assembly. The commission members shall represent all stake holders and there shall be seven (7) members from each grand division of the state. The members shall represent stakeholders that include large and small businesses; hospitals; legislators; health care professionals, which shall include both physicians and nurses; advocates; uninsured citizens; and other experts.

4-56-102. The commission shall consist only of volunteers and members shall not be entitled to remuneration except for reimbursement for travel expenses in accordance with travel regulations promulgated by the commissioner of finance and administration, under title 4, chapter 5, and approved by the attorney general and reporter.

4-56-103. The commission shall issue a report as to its progress to the state in November of each year, beginning with November of 2007. The commission shall issue its final recommendation for providing affordable, continuous and quality care for all the people of Tennessee in November 2009. The commission shall cease to exist on June 30, 2010.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.